

# The District Light

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bhodwitz@gmail.com

## Snippets

This issue of our publication will consist of short pieces of explanation, insights, and education.

## Masonry is . . .

We are told that Masonry is a “system of morality, veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols.” This is perhaps the most accurate, most beautiful, and the most comprehensive definition of Masonry in as few words as has ever been given.

When it is broken down into its several parts, it becomes clearer:

It truly is a System. It is not just a hodge-podge of rules, maxims, and precepts thrown together without order or design.

It is a system of Morality. Morality is the “doctrine of the right and wrong in human conduct.”

It is veiled in Allegory. An allegory is a story that has a deeper or more general meaning in addition to its surface meaning.

It is illustrated by Symbols. What might be otherwise unintelligible in the allegory is made plain by the symbols accompanying it.

Therefore, in plain words, Masonry is a clear and orderly program of instruction in living your life in a moral and spiritual way, and the use of words, phrases, and symbols are used to identify and understand the more profound and deeper lessons that are not as readily seen on the surface.

Bro. Andrew S. Young  
Tomball, Texas

Brethren, Freemasonry is a tried and tested true brotherhood, being dedicated to the freedom of ideals and religion, the advancement of light and knowledge, and the continued defense of these virtues from the wicked ways of the lowly cowan.

W.Bro. Sammy Ferguson, St. Mark's Lodge

## Our Masonic Progression

It used to be that, to learn a trade, young men were assigned to an accomplished craftsman to watch, practice, and so acquire the required skills.

The apprentice, when he had completed his indenture, was taken by his master and "entered" on the rolls of the lodge.

He was not immediately "accepted" as a Fellowcraft because, although he had satisfied his master, it was then mandatory that he also satisfy the body of the Craft. When that had been done, following a period of trial and probation, he was invested with "the Master's Word" and recognized as a Fellow. He could then travel in foreign countries and there work and receive Master's wages.

## Why do we Square the lodge?

Bro. Harry Carr in *The Freemason at Work* stated, “The practice of squaring the lodge is wholly admirable, because it adds much to the dignity of the ceremonies, so long as it is not carried to extremes.”

To answer the question, we square the lodge as required in the ritual. It is almost certain that the practice arose unintentionally. In the early



1730s, the ‘lodge’, i.e. the Tracing Board, was drawn on the floor, usually within a border, or else the ‘floor-cloth’ (then just coming into use) was rolled out onto the middle of the floor.

In the small tavern rooms which were the principal places of meeting there cannot have been much space left for traversing the lodge and, if the ‘drawing’ or ‘floor-cloth’ was to be protected, a certain amount of squaring was inevitable.

[source unknown]

**“Just, Perfect, and Regular”**

A Lodge is considered “just” when it has in use the three Great Lights, a charter or warrant, and the required number of brethren to open the Lodge and conduct its business. “This lodge . . . regularly held, assembled, and properly dedicated.”

The Warrant is the document given by a Supreme Masonic body to a subordinate body, empowering it to exist and work.

**The Experience**

When we open lodge we go through a group meditative process of singularly focusing on the same thing. It brings us together – into the moment. How much more meaningful would our personal encounters, connections and friendships be if we made a habit of carrying this single-minded focus forward and employing it when we engage in fellowship. We will live this life once. Rather than hurling ourselves mentally ever forward to tomorrow’s self we can be a more complete fulfillment of this present self by living in the moment.

**The Mystic Tie**

The expression is used to signify the band of fraternal union among Freemasons. It seems to have been first used by Robby Burns when he wrote, in a farewell to his Lodge:

“Adieu, a heart warm fond adieu  
Dear Brothers of the Mystic Tie.”

**Cable Tow**

A cable tow is a short cord or rope. In Masonry, it is symbolic of the first ties between the Initiate and his new Brethren.

“A Cable Tow’s length from shore” refers to a measurable distance; a “cable length” is usually from 100 to 140 fathoms. Present-day thought is that the “length of a cable tow” is the scope of a man’s reasonable ability.



**TGAOTU**

‘The Great Architect of the Universe’ is a interfaith name coined by the Christian theologian John Calvin (he coined a number of names he used for God). Freemasonry adopted his name or term for use in Lodges where Masons of more than one religion may sit in Lodge together.

Using an interfaith name, when Deity is referred to, is a good way to treat all religions equally among friends and Brothers; it allows each man to accept the prayer as his own to the Deity of his religion when it is given by one Mason on behalf of all of us.

The prayer is ended with the traditional word “Amen” to which all Masons can truthfully reply ‘so may it be,’ by substituting an archaic word to say “So Mote It Be.”

Ed Halpaus

**Another Attack; Another Answer**

One of the favorite charges of the anti-Masonic movement is, “Freemasonry is satanic.” They continue, “Just look at the rituals: You can’t swear an oath to freemasonry and be a Christian at the same time. See James 5:12”

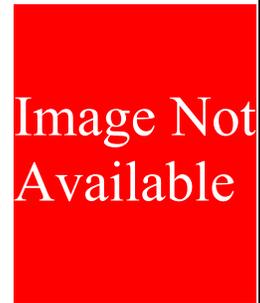
Referring to a Biblical passage is a common way of pretending to have superior knowledge, but usually does not stand up to actually reading the reference or other related passages.

But to the question: Can a Christian take the vows or obligations of a Mason?

Yes, with the exception of a very few denominations. If a Christian belongs to a group which forbids all vows such as swearing to tell the truth in court, or taking an oath when accepting an official position, then he probably could not take the obligation.

Any Christian whose denomination does not forbid such oaths could take the Masonic obligations.

[source unknown]



**Speculative?**



Today, the word ‘speculative’ describes a risky investment. This is regrettable, since the word is so often used to describe Freemasonry and has great value for preserving a tradition of Masonic development.

We really can't do without the expression ‘Speculative Freemasonry’, even though ‘Symbolical Freemasonry’ might be a more accurate term today.

A brief history:

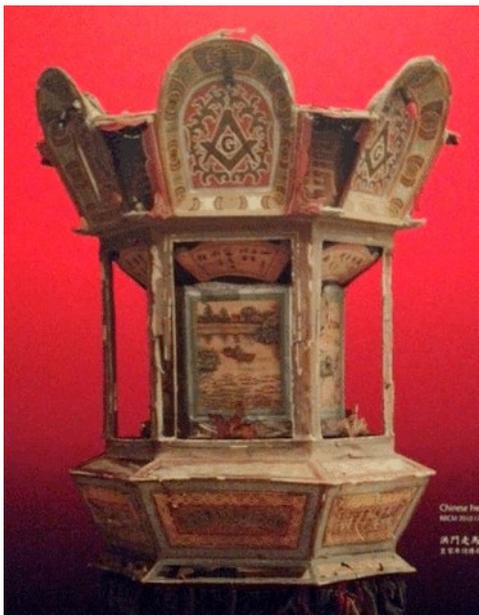
The Royal Society was organized in 1660 to promote learning through the performance of experiments. These experiments were referred to as ‘speculation.’ The members were speculative men, i.e. they observed, sought, examined, contemplated and meditated on new facts or knowledge by experimenting with what was already known. They exchanged that knowledge with each other. Freemasonry, therefore, originally intended to foster an ‘experimental’ search for Light, or Truth.

That characteristic was the new element which made the Fraternity different from what it had been before. Brotherly love, moral training, and relief had always been emphasized in the lodges of operative Craftsmen. Architectural knowledge had always been imparted to develop master workmen; but as a Speculative Craft, Freemasonry in the eighteenth century placed its greatest emphasis on ‘experimental philosophy’ and knowledge of the Truth to which all learning leads.

Therefore, to be true to its origins, Freemasonry must be an educational institution in the broadest sense.



As Masons we recognize the fact that one man glimpses the truth but partially. But by speculating with others, we will see more aspects of the truth of any situation. One goal of masonic education should be to explore with others the symbolical meanings and to listen with unbiased respect and eager curiosity to hear the other's point of view.



**Chinese Freemason’s Lantern – One of a Kind**

This lantern identifies Chinese Canadians through their cultural heritage, their connections across the Pacific and their efforts in building Victoria’s Chinatown community in the early 20th century. Chinese Freemasons celebrate their 150th anniversary in Canada as one of the oldest and most influential organizations in Chinese-Canadian communities.

According to Chinese elders, this lantern was hand made in Victoria’s Chinatown by an old master. It was likely on display for the Lantern Festival in the 1930s. The exquisite craftsmanship illustrates the best of a tradition rarely seen today, one that is uniquely preserved by Canadian Chinatowns.